

# PATHFINDERS

*By Miriam Green Ellis*

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*From R.P.*

# PREFACE

BY KENNETH M. HAIG

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"This was written as a talk for members of the Canadian Women's Press Club in convention assembled at Edmonton 1956." Miriam Green Ellis' handsome face clouded as she looked about at her conversation-piece living room. "Now the Club has printed it. It will read like hell."

Miriam's gloom refused to lift. "I have mentioned those who first came to mind, but the moment I got through the talk, others crowded in. There is Elizabeth Ferguson of the Toronto Branch, and Edna Kells whose column in her own women's page section of the Edmonton Journal has built itself into the history of Alberta. There is Harriet Walker who as theatrical press agent brought the guys and dolls of the stage to the Winnipeg branch meetings and there they remain in merry memory. Her daughter Ruth brings it all back in that charming book *Curtain Time*. There are more, more, more."

The CWPC which has members from Newfoundland to Vancouver Island is the oldest organization of its kind in the Commonwealth. It is the dean of such organizations on this Continent. Fifty years and more of history is not easy to condense. Mrs. Ellis' talk makes no claim to cover such an assignment. There isn't a statistic in it. It does not study trends and it makes no psychological inferences. All she has done - all -- is to catch in her web, living moments and pass them on. As she asserts, she has not covered the whole membership, but there is nothing invidious in her selection. These are but a few names of persons, many of whom have gone over the hill. Does this mean we shall not see their like again?

Well, there is Miriam.

Miriam got caught by sending in a piece way back when to the Prince Albert Herald. The pomegranate seeds were in her teeth. Next job was on the Regina Post where she had applied as Women's Editor but got picked up as a general reporter. A few days later when the gentleman assigned to the City Hall beat was discovered with a mind well above civic affairs, Miriam was sent forward. Her copy made Page One.

After Regina came Edmonton, the Edmonton Bulletin, and its Editor, Hon. Frank Oliver. Miriam still is not sure where one stopped and the other took over. It was here she became prey to the habit of covering all sorts of exhibitions, not only big time but every last one within radius of her long-suffering jalopy. She had found her newspaper love in Agriculture. Thus, when she became western editor of the Family

Herald and Weekly Star, the paper did not attempt to fence her in. Her kingdom ranged from the Lakes to Vancouver Island, only varied by side trips to the Royal and the International Stock shows.

Miriam has twice sat on the CWPC board as director for Manitoba; she is permanent honorary president of the Saskatoon branch. She has given notable service as chairman of the Memorial Award and of the Beneficiary Fund Committees.

Always she has held the Club in her heart.

So too the Club holds her.

# PATHFINDERS

BY MIRIAM GREEN ELLIS

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Members of the Canadian Women's Press Club have made an impress on the cultural, social, and political life of Canada, but you will know more of that than I do. I have been asked to tell you a few of my personal encounters with some of these women.

Fifty years ago this year, the first convention of the Canadian Press Women was held in Winnipeg when Kathleen Blake Coleman, better known as "Kit," was elected president. She was the first regularly employed editor of a women's page in Canada. That was on the old Mail and Empire, Toronto.

Next president was Kate Simpson Hayes of the Free Press, Winnipeg. I only met her once when she came out of retirement to speak at one of our triennial banquets. I think that was in Calgary. As I remember, it was quite a racy speech.

In 1909 Mrs. R. C. Osborne, Winnipeg, became president, following Miss E. L. Barry of Montreal.

## MY FIRST CONVENTION

Miss Marjorie MacMurchy of Toronto was elected president at the 1910 convention in Toronto. When I saw her three years later in Edmonton I was lost in admiration for her efficiency and her hat. It was the prettiest and most becoming hat I have ever seen. Miss MacMurchy was later Lady Willison.

At that Edmonton convention, which was my first, Colonel George Ham, who had been the spearpoint in starting the CWPC, saw that we all had railway passes. That was in the good old days when the Transport Board was not so potent. And he also came along to be sure we all had a good time. Colonel Ham was made honorary president of the Club. The Grand Trunk Pacific had just come on the boards, and was building west of Edmonton. To implement their invitation to travel to the end-of-steel, Cy. Warman, as their public relations officer, was our host to Tete Jaune Cache, the end-of-steel. That is east of Jasper. A picture of us taken in front of the construction shacks at Tete Jaune Cache is in the archives now.

That night on the G.T.P. train, we were ready for bed when word came from Mr. Warman that there was food and coffee for us out in the diner. We had to send back word that we were undressed, but he said just "to slip on a dressing gown and come," which most of us did to the consternation of the more prudish members. They were further shocked when one or two of the girls smoked. Tongues wagged far into the night

about these two indiscretions; the press club could never outlive it, 'twas thought. No one even considered a night-cap in those days. I mean the kind you drink.

We came back to Edmonton and Mr. Ham took us all on to Vancouver, a very grandiose gesture.

At that convention was a homespun woman from the Maritimes. She had on a homemade suit and hat and hanging around her neck was a purse, a camera, a notebook, binoculars. She must have been close to 40 years old, but at every station she got out and sent a card back home, for her family had worried considerably about her travelling alone out to the wild-and-woolly west, she said.

She was utterly innocent of teeth. They had been pulled before she had known about the free trip. So then she had to decide whether to spend her limited money on teeth or trip. She chose the trip.

Then Mr. Ham came up with the suggestion we go on to the coast. Of course that was a stickler, none of us had much money, but we wanted terribly to have her see Vancouver; we felt it would probably be her only chance. We took up a collection but we did not know how to make her take it. These Maritimers can be proud as Lucifer. I don't remember how we overcame her pride, but I know she went. The morning we arrived in Vancouver and were standing around waiting for our rooms, Mr. Warman asked me to have breakfast with him. Then he saw our Maritime friend standing alone and suggested I go ask her to join us. I told him to ask her himself, but he said she would be sure he was trying to seduce her. I had rather a hard time persuading her. When we sat down the waiter gave each of us a menu card about two feet long. She was rather stunned. You could see she was looking at the cost side of the card. She just could not see anything that was cheap enough. Mr. Warman asked me to help. I suggested one or two things, but as soon as she saw the price, she shook her head. The waiter still stood, Mr. Warman was getting edgy and kept urging me to choose something for her. So, knowing she was from the Maritimes, I decided on fish. I hope she liked fish for that is what she got.

Although she was not a woman of the world, she was definitely a woman of letters, wrote poetry and prose for the best English magazines.

Anyway, I think she got back home pure as the driven snow.

At that Edmonton convention, sitting modestly in the back benches for I had only recently joined the club, I met for the first time Janey Canuck and Nellie L. McClung, both experienced writers.

#### EMILY MURPHY

There was no convention during the First Great War, so Emily Murphy was president through from 1913 to 1920. She was an author but could also dig for news with the best as shown in her book, "The Black Candle," a statement of the drug traffic. Before that she had written some beautiful essay-like prose on her early experience when she came west with her two little girls and her preacher husband.

We used to stand and gawk when the Murphy women rode sidesaddle down Jasper Avenue. Not many women rode horses in those days, especially city women.

The Murphys used to live on 89th Avenue near the bridge and I have a snapshot of her in the front yard with a tiny

bird on her finger. She was that kind of a woman, firm and kind, gay and heart-warming.

It was a nice place to drop in. You could always be sure of an invitation to stay to luncheon, with good cheese as a finale.

You all know the important place she took as head of a committee that fought through the privy council to establish that women were "persons" eligible to sit in the Senate. Three of those women, Mrs. Parlby, Mrs. McClung and Mrs. Murphy, were having a little get-together in Mrs. Parlby's room at the Macdonald one night. As they came down the elevator and out into the rotunda, they were laughing and talking like a group of teenagers. Mrs. Murphy did not giggle -- she laughed -- and so did the other Irish woman, Nellie McClung. Next day it was all over town that these three women came rolling out of the Macdonald drunk as lords which, of course, was funny to those who knew they were all teetotalers.

Mrs. Murphy was important as magistrate and judge of the juvenile court. One morning I slipped from my beat in to her court and there was a rather bepowdered gal in the box. As I entered I heard the girl say "the woman had on a brown leather coat." I saw a twinkle in Mrs. Murphy's eye as she caught sight of me. I was wearing a brown leather coat at that time.

She asked further who was the man. The girl said "Arthur Murphy"-- when it was my turn to cock a smile. Arthur Murphy was also the name of Janey Canuck's pious husband.

I have seen her clear the court, bring a young girl up beside her, put her arm around her. Presently the girl would be sobbing out her story.

I remember at that time the Murphys had a Negro maid. Mrs. Murphy called her "the colored supplement."

Mrs. Murphy had an extraordinarily keen legal mind. Many of us were very disappointed when she was not appointed the first woman senator. Being the first woman magistrate in the British Empire, some of the lawyers went out of their way to embarrass her even to questioning the legality of her appointment. But she kept a firm upper lip and her sense of humor. The Fergusons were Irish and addicted to the practice of law.

Her biography was written by Byrne Hope Sanders. I was very disappointed when I heard that Byrne, an easterner, had been intrusted with this job, and said so. I had thought her daughters should do it.

When I found what a swell job Byrne made of it, I wrote and congratulated her and confessed how wrong I had been.

Byrne and Margaret Aiken joined forces in electing Margaret to the House of Commons, and in writing a book about it which is nothing short of a text on how to win elections, and very smart too.

#### AGNES MAULE MACHAR

If you look at the picture of the Press Club taken in Edmonton in 1913 you will see a wee, unobtrusive body who was really the pioneer of Canadian women journalists. She was Agnes Maule Machar, who, before the turn of the century, had contributed prose and verse to Canadian, United States and English magazines and had published books of verse, prose and fiction. Sometimes she wrote under the pen name of "Fidelis." She was asked by Goldwin Smith to contribute to

his Canada Monthly. She was our guest speaker at the Edmonton meeting, I think.

Effie Laurie Storer was a charter member of the CWPC, I think. She was a daughter of P. G. Laurie, Battleford, who started the first newspaper west of Winnipeg, and Effie worked there as well as on several other prairie papers.

One night the Edmonton club gave a dinner at the Macdonald at which both Hon. Frank Oliver and Mrs. Storer were present. When Mr. Oliver introduced Mrs. Storer he gave credit to her father for publishing the first prairie paper. They had already set up shop when Mr. Oliver, his oxen and his hand press, drove west the next year. Mr. Oliver said he wished to set the record straight on this point as many people thought the Edmonton Bulletin was the first.

Two old stalwarts in the writing game were Agnes Deans Cameron and Agnes Laut. I am not rightly sure either of them were members of the CWPC. Laut was on the Manitoba Free Press and was special correspondent to New York and Montreal papers. Her books on the Hudson Bay Company are references and later when she moved to New York she had a good market for her magazine pieces. She came back to Canada for lecture tours.

Agnes Deans Cameron also moved to the States. She made a trip down north in the early days and wrote a book about it. That book came back at me like a boomerang. When I went down the MacKenzie in 1922, the natives clammed up on me when I said I wanted to write about them. Seems Cameron had borrowed precious photographs and failed to return them as promised. Also, they said she pretended in her book to have been right down the MacKenzie, when she had only been to Fort Smith, which is just at the top of Alberta. I never checked either statement but these northern people are rather touchy.

They looked down their noses at me, too. How could a tenderfoot like me pretend to write about the north? What did I know about it? Now, if Captain Smith or Chief Squirrel wrote a book, that would be really something.

I looked into that suggestion too, but the Captain was 95 years old and Chief Squirrel could not even sign his name.

But of course the natives were right about them knowing the north country.

However, when Agnes Deans Cameron went through Edmonton we gave her a party at the curling rink. She was wearing a tartan tam, and Peggy Watt and Janey Canuck were looking very smart in that picture, which I turned over to the archives.

Peggy had her own Walter Winchell ideas about a society page, but it was never dull.

### SUSANNA MOODIE

Susanna Moodie was definitely not a member of the CWPC for there was no press club in her day, but her book "Roughing it in the Bush," is one of the Canadian books I cherish. She was one of the Strickland family, most of whom wrote books.

Ocean travel in the early 1830's was not simple and neither was living in the bush near the present Cobourg. Her husband left her alone when he went to fight in the Rebellion. She wrote this book and between the stumps grew potatoes and vegetables to ward off scurvy in her children.

When Isobel Armstrong of Ottawa was president, she wired me to be her guest at an Ottawa banquet. Senator Cairine Wilson was the chairman. My train arrived just before the dinner and Isobel was quite upset when I went to the dinner in the suit I was wearing. Of course, that was Ottawa, and protocol is important but my suit was shining clean. I had hardly sat down all the way from Montreal so I would not crease it. To my backwoods way of thinking, I was quite okay.

Lillian Thomas says she was not a charter member, but she came in very shortly afterwards. For years she has been teaching the young ones how to write stories. A week or so ago Jean Hinds, on the CBC gave a throw-back on one of Lill's early successes. It was the play "The Spite Fence," and the Winnipeg group played it at the first Dominion Drama festival held that year at Ottawa. Jean took one of the parts.

#### GENEVIEVE LIPSETT SKINNER

Graduate of University of Manitoba, Genevieve Lipsett Skinner went through for law and back to newspaper work. In Winnipeg she worked on the old Telegram with Colonel Porter, and she was tops in the reporting business. Later she went to the Montreal Star and was the first woman in the press gallery at Ottawa. Before the big bust in 1929, she was making a neat bit of money in stocks.

She decided to have a real blow-out, so she bought a luxurious suite and sailed for Paris. She just had her regular two weeks holidays, so after two days in Paris she came home still in the luxury quarters.

Press representatives were just coming into style then and Genevieve did not like the idea at all. She contended they just kept a reporter away from the people she wanted to see.

I happened to go to Montreal about that time, and she was disgusted with me for not making some easy money in stocks. I never had been a gambler in the slightest degree, but I went around with her on her beat. Before the day had passed she and the stock salesmen had persuaded me to buy a "sure thing." But I did not buy much. By next day I was sorry I had done it, and finally Genevieve went with me to sell it. To my amazement the stock had gone up over night, but it did not change my determination to sell out. When I got back to Winnipeg and went to press club, the girls wanted to know what I had done down east, and who had I seen, and so on.

Quite breezily I said "well I made \$100 in Simmons' Beds."

Said Kenneth Haig, demurely dropping her eyes, "I think that is a lewd remark."

#### KATHERINE HALE

Katherine Hale is poet, author, and lecturer. I think I like best her Canadian Cities of Romance, but her poetry is lovely. Indeed, her prose is really poetry, and when she lectured, that was poetry, too.

Katherine never had to worry about counting calories. She would not do in a windy country. But she proved that one does not have to lay on bulk to have a mind that integrates smoothly.

Katherine Hale is one of our two honorary members. The other is Kay Nairn.

### KENNETH M. HAIG

From 1923 to 1926 Kenneth Haig was an outstanding president. We could always be proud when she was the guest speaker at any event. She was editorial writer on the Manitoba Free Press, specializing on educational matters. A recent editorial that stands out in my mind was written at the retirement of Sir Winston Churchill. It was a gem. In addition to her biography of E. Cora Hind, she has other books that have not yet reached the publisher.

Last winter some ill-advised artist visiting Winnipeg condoled with the local artists that there was nothing in sky or landscape on the prairies to light their genius. Kenneth wrote a poem that was published in the Winnipeg Tribune that took the hide off that lad. That piece should go into the archives.

When she was president we were being entertained on one of the ocean liners. She asked me if I knew the song "All the nice girls love a sailor." I did not. So she locked me in a stateroom and kept me there till I learned it. Then she sat in dignity at the Captain's right hand. When she gave me the nod I led the singing "All the nice girls love a sailor."

Miss Haig succeeded Lucy Doyle as president. There was a little hard feeling the year Lucy was elected. The western girls had finally persuaded Miss Hind to stand for president. The eastern members feeling that the west had held the presidency all during the war years when there was no convention, thought an eastern president was due. E. Cora never accepted again.

### MAE CLENDENAN

Following Kenneth Haig as president was Mae Clendenan, one of the stalwarts of the Press Club. She had been women's editor on the Farmer's Advocate in Winnipeg and followed that paper when it moved to London, Ont. Her knowledge of the inner workings of the Press Club, and its purpose, was never more apparent, or more important than when she took over the secretaryship. Her gallant courage at that last meeting in Toronto is something we like to remember. She died soon after.

### ELIZABETH BAILEY PRICE

Elizabeth Bailey Price, president from 1932 to 1935, was ghost writer on the Martha Louise Black biography.

This dear little Mrs. Black, who went to the Yukon when things were roaring, was a student of Arctic flora and her book on that subject is illustrated by beautiful photographs taken by her husband.

When Mr. Black, who was federal member for the Yukon, became ill, she was offered the nomination and was elected.

She still lives in the Yukon and the last picture I saw of her was sitting in her wheelchair while the Duke of Edinburgh bent over her. I hope he kissed her. She is still writing.

### IRENE MOORE

Some of you younger ones may not have heard of Irene Moore, although she died only a few years ago here in Edmonton.

Known as Dinty Moore, she worked for years on the Saskatchewan Phoenix, and then for thirty more years on the Regina Leader.

She won a \$500 prize from the historical branch of the Quebec Government for her book "Valiant LaVerendrye," a biography of the famous explorer. It was published by the King's Printer of Quebec in 1927. She helped to get out a book on prairie life, a book for war brides: she collaborated on a book of Saskatchewan poetry. She received a medal from King Albert of Belgium for her efforts in raising money for food for the Belgians in the First World War.

Dinty helped arrange tours for faltering poets and authors. From her very limited funds she bought and gave away their books just to help out.

Dinty wore her black hair in a boyish bob, with Mamie Eisenhower bangs. She seldom had a decent dress or a warm coat and lived as cheaply as possible, to help out someone with a crop failure, or some other catastrophe.

However, when she finally had to retire, all the women's organizations in Regina, together with her own paper, rallied round to do her every honor in their power. They loved her, and they knew how well she had served them.

### MARSHALL SAUNDERS

Some of you will remember Marshall Saunders. She loved animals and had a houseful of birds, and dogs and wrote about them.

The last time I saw her she gave me a copy of her "Beautiful Joe," in Esperanto. I am very proud of that souvenir.

So far as I know it is the only Canadian book translated into Esperanto.

### ANNIE E. MATHEWSON

Another veteran among women writers was Annie E. Mathewson, editor of the Fredericton Gleaner. She was on the paper for 50 years. Do you remember the time in Winnipeg when the press boys gave us a cocktail party -- and Annie climbed on the piano?

### E. CORA HIND

E. Cora Hind came to Winnipeg in 1882, arriving by way of Duluth and St. Paul. The C.P.R. had not started commuting to Vancouver then. In those days water was delivered to the 7,000 inhabitants by oxcart. Next morning she applied at the Free Press for a job, but they were not interested in skirts. So she set up shop as Winnipeg's first stenographer. However, in the next twenty years she had built herself into a necessity, and the editor sent for her one day and offered her the job of agricultural editor.

Kenneth Haig tells in her biography of Miss Hind that during this waiting period she was developing a market with outside live stock and grain journals, and she brought in by telegraph, reports on butter prices for the benefit of the dairy industry. She was secretary of the Manitoba Dairy Association for several years.

She noticed that the by-line on these trade journals was E. C. Hind. When she protested, the editors explained that

her reports would carry more weight if the readers thought they were written by a man.

Back came her instructions that if they did not carry her usual signature, "E. Cora Hind," they could not use her material. She felt she owed this to other woman writers.

On her 75th birthday, E. Cora spent the day flying over Australia. When she got back from that round-the-world trip, she gave a lecture in the Walker theatre, the funds from which were the backlog of our Triennial convention expenses the next year. She was wearing a very elegant dress she had bought in Italy or France.

After that she had operations for cataract. The night before she went into hospital, I called around to hold her hand. It was 8:30, but she was just home from the office where she was cleaning up her desk before her tour in hospital.

She was wearing a dinky little apron and was making lamb stew.

When I saw her after her operation she had a bandage over one eye, but the rakish look was counteracted by a very chic pinky-mauve satin dressing gown and pretty slippers. Cora was always proud of her neat ankles. The rest of us were proud of her head equipment.

Sometimes I drove her on our crop-inspection trips. Usually I had a dog along.

This time it was a Setter pup: he got bored sitting in the back seat alone and proceeded to chew the corners of her luggage and the handles. When we got to the Macdonald hotel that night, the porters had to carry her bags in their arms -- the handles were all helpless.

She would not let me whip Laddie, nor would she let me buy her new luggage. Said she should have watched her baggage, and, anyway, Laddie was her friend.

She had a marvelous nose for mushrooms. She could spot them a mile away.

When I heard her jealous male rivals talk of her as an old "sour-puss" I thought of a time we were driving along dirt roads -- it looked a bit like rain, but we thought we could get to the village before it broke. It is such a messy job putting on chains in the mud. Suddenly Laddie made a flying leap from the back seat to Miss Hind's lap and buried his head under her arm. It was only then we heard the thunder. But she held that long-legged pup till the storm was over.

She wrote a couple of books on her tours as well as thousands of newspaper columns. Probably the thing for which she was best known all over the world were her crop reports. No one else has ever hit the wheat estimate on the nose so precisely year after year as E. Cora Hind. Chicago and London waited for that report. It was a natural that she should be the first woman to get on a grain boat sailing out of Hudson Bay.

One day the University of Manitoba got around to granting her an honorary degree and we were all very happy.

Of all the hundreds of women who have belonged to the press club, I doubt if anyone east or west has been such a stalwart supporter. She kept the club on an even keel. She always attended the Winnipeg meetings when she was in town and even yet her ghost looms up if any suggestion is brought forward that would deprecate the prestige or dignity or value of the Canadian Women's Press Club.

I think it was after she was officially retired, but still yearning for the old contacts, she went to an agricultural conference at Olds, Alberta.

One afternoon I noticed she was all dressed up in her lace dress ready for the banquet at night, at which Premier Aberhart was to speak. When I came back a couple hours later I was met with the news that she had collapsed and some of the men had carried her to her bed. I made ready to stand by but as soon as she recognised me, she said, "go on and get ready for the dinner; you have to report the premier, I'll be all right."

I went back up to her room every little while. Once I found she had managed to get out of her dress and was lying in her underclothes. I managed to get her undressed and into her nightgown. Once she was so still that I held a mirror to her mouth to see if she were still breathing. I cannot remember just why we did not get a doctor. Maybe there was none in Olds; maybe she refused to have a doctor. One time when she was conscious she worried about her dress; she feared she had torn it and it was nice lace.

Several times during the night I went in to see her. Finally, in exhaustion I went soundly asleep. I woke with a start at 7:30, threw on my gown and hurried in wondering what I would find. She was not there. I asked someone and they said she was in the washroom brushing her teeth. Sure, she was just ready for breakfast.

That was E. Cora.

She used to drive convention speakers dippy by sitting at the press table knitting. Many a pair of war socks was knit while she listened with one ear to boring speeches.

#### VIOLET McNAUGHTON

Some years after, the press club had another member who went before the chancellor of the University of Saskatchewan and was hooded and given the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws. She is a scrap of a woman, and her ladies-in-waiting had a bad time turning up enough of her ceremonial robes so she could walk. Dr. Violet McNaughton did not get this honor for her literary work so much as for her work with people. When the Western Producer set up shop, they wanted a real farm woman as editor. She was it.

She was the first president of the Saskatchewan Equal Franchise League -- I know because I was secretary.

She has attended world conventions in many countries, including her stint at Geneva.

She has an amazing memory. One day she borrowed a song from me and in due course it was returned. Now who else but Violet would have remembered twenty-five years after from whom she had borrowed a song.

I just mention Hughena McCorquodale of High River, Alberta, for twenty-nine years a writer on the High River Times. We don't have to do anything about her but follow the crowd. A couple of weeks ago the whole community of High River set aside a Sunday as McCorquodale Day. They were all there, ranchers, farmers, bankers, Indians. The Indians had already presented her some ten years ago with Eagle feathers, and gave her the name "Eagle Woman."

A few of our members went into politics, but not as many as you would think. Abbie Lane, by the sea, has been an alderman for several years, in addition to her radio chores. Nancy Hodges at the other side of the continent was a member of the Legislature of B.C., then Speaker of the House and now Senator at Ottawa.

Charlotte Whitton is another gal who has trouble pinning up enough hem on her college robes to keep from stepping on them when she goes forward for honorary degrees. However, she should be getting on to the idea now for she has done it three times. Once the honor came from her alma mater, Queen's University; once from Acadia and once from Smith.

After Charlotte had thoroughly stirred up the baby adoption racket in Alberta, she started to stir things up in Ottawa with the result that she was elected mayor and that is what she is. She has been host to queens and princes and governors.

Her book of the Gillies Lumber Company is of historical significance. And one can say without argument that she does not require notes to make her speeches. I think Charlotte Whitton's story is far from finished.

#### NELLIE L. McCLUNG

Nellie L. McClung has a shelf of thirteen books, most important of which were the two autobiographical books, but the one that has always been most closely associated with her name was her first; "Sowing Seeds in Danny," which has gone through many editions. Her autobiographies give a vivid picture of the social and political life of western Canada over the last fifty years. Many of her books were translated, especially into the Scandinavian languages.

She taught school when she was only a youngster. She married Wes. McClung, she said, so as to get the mother-in-law she admired.

I think she wrote "Sowing Seeds" when her first baby was about crib size, and many a time when she was writing her later books I have seen her last born and a couple of his friends sitting on top of her desk, insisting on talking to her. There were five children altogether, and her granddaughter is carrying on in the writing business in Edmonton.

Nellie L. spearheaded the "votes for women" campaign in Manitoba, and that is another story in itself. Fellow travellers in that cause were Lill Thomas and E. Cora. It was when Nellie came to Edmonton that she teamed up with Janey Canuck and the other three to establish that women were persons in the meaning of the British North American Act.

She lectured all over this country, in the United States and in Europe. She was a handsome woman and liked pretty clothes. She was not athletic, but she could go down to the basement and put through a tub of clothes with anyone, and if you happened to be there when she was having a seizure for dyeing, it was well to escape quickly -- she would have the shirt off your back and in the dye pot before you knew.

One day she was complaining about her husband who overbought the meat supply. Even by stuffing the dog she could not clear out the refrigerator. There was always a fifteen-pound roast awaiting.

But then, she admitted, "I cannot hold my hand when it comes to buying butter. I have two crocks of butter in the basement right now." She was Irish, and generous. If a caller happened in at meal time, she would ask the kids to move over and get another plate.

She had such a knack of telling a story that the whole family was rather spoiled.

They would urge her off to a lecture or a sermon. They did not go with her; they preferred to hear her account of

what happened. As a matter of fact, she could throw drama into the dullest speeches that brought them to life, and all the McClungs had a good sense of humor. She was an inimitable mimic and had a terrific memory.

The first time I met Nellie L. was at the Edmonton Triennial in 1913. Twenty years after she could tell me what I was wearing.

She wrote her books in between having babies. Her youngest went with her to club meetings and when he got bored, went around gathering up all the hymn books, and passing them out to the members.

The kids always accepted their mother's friends as their friends. In that comfortable sitting room there were usually interesting people. One night, I met Laura Goodman Salverson and her husband. She had written her first book and wanted advice about the contents and the intricate business of publication. She got everything Mrs. McClung had to give. There was no meanness or jealousy in her makeup.

Nellie L. was member of the Alberta legislature and the men in the press gallery adjudged her about the best student of legislation in the entire group. Of course, her quick Irish wit stood her in good stead.

One day she put forward a resolution. A young Scot from down the line got to his feet. He was a persistent speaker on any and every subject.

He contended that the honorable member for Edmonton should lay this matter over. He spoke at length, belaboring the fact that he had had no opportunity to speak to the question.

Quietly she rose, her little hands resting on the desk. She was sorry if the question was being rushed; she was particularly sorry if the honorable member had not had an opportunity to speak to it.

"For, so far as I know, the honorable member has never had an unuttered thought in the House," she said.

The whole assembly just fell apart. In a half dozen words she has expressed what they all had felt for months.

One time I had a friend from Fort Smith who was very concerned over the education of her children. There was only a mission school for the Indians, who are not noted for their attendance records, then or now. This English mother and father tried to supplement their education at home. They came into Edmonton one time by dog team and discussed this with me. When something came up that was too big for me I usually went to Janey Canuck or Nellie L. McClung. Nellie suggested we go down to see Perren Baker, minister of education. Perren took over and established correspondence courses. Of course, those kids could only get mail about once during the winter. But it worked. Presently they graduated to high school at Edmonton and then the University. The girl won a scholarship to an eastern college -- the boy became a Rhodes Scholar.

The last few years were not easy for Nellie L. She suffered a lot. Toward the end she was lying very still. We wondered if she had gone. But with a little twitch she opened her eyes.

"Oh, I'm still here! I'll never believe I'm dead till I see it in the paper," and she closed her eyes again.

On her tombstone in the cemetery in Victoria is the simple legend, "Loved and Remembered." In a corner of the farm where she was born, the women's institutes of Grey County have erected a memorial to the memory of Nellie L. McClung. It will be dedicated this fall.

